

VZCZCXRO7395
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #0492/01 0561301
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 251301Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1867
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000492

SIPDIS

STATE FOR G/IWI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/19/2019
TAGS: [KWMN](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: GOI INSIDERS ON MINISTER OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS
RESIGNATION

REF: BAGHDAD 328

BAGHDAD 00000492 001.3 OF 002

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Steve Walker for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

11. Summary: (C) In the days following her abrupt resignation on February 5, it was unclear why Minister of State for Women's Affairs (MoSWA) Dr. Nawal Al-Samara'e she resigned, whether PM Maliki had in fact accepted her resignation, and whether Al-Samara'e might return if she could get more authority and an increased budget. Reliable sources have confirmed that Maliki has accepted Al-Samara'e's resignation and will not consider reinstating her. The head of parliament's Women, Family and Children's Committee has told us Al-Samara'e regrets her decision and wants to stay. End Summary.

Conflicting Stories

12. (C) Following MoSWA Dr. Nawal Al-Samara'e's resignation on February 5 (reftel), we have received conflicting stories as to her current and future prospects. On February 13, we received information from Al-Samara'e's office that Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki had not accepted her resignation and that she would continue in her post. However, on February 16, Minister of Human Rights (MoHR) Wijdan Salim informed PolOff that Maliki had told her personally that he had accepted Al-Samara'e's resignation and that he never wanted her back as a minister. In the event she was ever proposed for another ministerial position, he said, she would have go through the full parliamentary approval process.

13. (C) Meanwhile, we have also received reports from an official within the Tawafuq bloc to which Al-Samara'e belongs that her resignation was an attempt by Tawafuq to "exchange the MoSWA job" for a more influential position within government. (Comment: Post does not give much credence to such speculation, despite the source being highly placed within Tawafuq. End comment.) (Note: Al-Samara'e was one of six ministers appointed by Tawafuq when it rejoined the government in July 2008. End note.)

A Women's Affairs Insider's Account

14. (C) In a February 17 meeting, Samira al-Musawi, head of the parliamentary Committee for Women, Family and Children, confirmed that Maliki had accepted Al-Samara'e's resignation. Al-Musawi agreed that Al-Samara'e's resignation was probably a maneuver to get more high-profile responsibilities and better benefits (reportedly, Al-Samara'e also asked for a house in the International Zone.) Al-Musawi added that

Al-Samara'e now regrets resigning, is "confused," and wants to return. According to Al-Musawi, Al-Samara'e had constantly complained about her inadequate budget and mere advisory role. Al-Musawi said she pointed out to Al-Samara'e that she had known before accepting the MoSWA job what it was like. Al-Musawi lost patience when Al-Samara'e told her that "the leaders of her tribes" would support her and provide for her personal security. Al-Musawi found the statement ridiculous and told Al-Samara'e that there was an Iraqi government -- if every minister decided to call upon his or her tribe for personal protection, there would be "militia warfare."

15. (C) Al-Musawi also reported that after her resignation Al-Samara'e wanted to hold a press conference with Al-Musawi and fellow women parliamentarians Safia Suhail and Ala Talabani to highlight the difficulties she had faced as the MoSWA. Al-Musawi immediately declined, since it would be inappropriate to involve members of the legislative branch in what is an executive branch personnel issue. She added that Qwhat is an executive branch personnel issue. She added that Suhail and Talabani considered accepting, but then also declined.

16. (C) Al-Musawi appears to have some sympathy for Al-Samara'e and noted that Al-Samara'e's own party, the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), had never really supported her. On the other hand, Al-Musawi said she had often advised Al-Samara'e that she needed to cooperate and coordinate with other ministers and be a "self-starter."

A National Strategy for Women's Development

17. (C) Al-Musawi and her Committee have drafted a

BAGHDAD 00000492 002.2 OF 002

"Strategic Working Plan for Social Change in Field of Woman, the Family, and Children." Although the plan has not been formally enacted, Al-Musawi said PM Maliki and 13 ministries have approved it. She further noted that the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) is using her Committee's draft plan as the basis for MoLSA's own 2009 work plan. Al-Musawi emphasized the need for awareness training about women's rights in all GOI government entities that deal with women's issues and particularly at the general directorate level and below.

Comment

18. (C) Al-Musawi's account of Al-Samara'e's troubled tenure as MoSWA is corroborated by other contacts, including MoHR Wijdan Salim. We've heard that despite her apparent frustrations with her position within PM Maliki's administration, Al-Samara'e now regrets her decision to resign. Regardless, it seems that Al-Samara'e's time in government is over for now. End comment.
BUTENIS